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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2018

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SUBJECT: FRANCE REQUESTS SUPPORT FOR SHAB'A FARMS MENTION
IN UNSCR 1701 PRST

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Kathleen Allegrone for reas
ons 1.4. (b), (d).

¶1. (C) In consecutive meetings at the French MFA July 8 and 9, officials in the NEA bureau-equivalent have asked for U.S. support for French mention of Shab'a Farms in the draft PRST the French mission to the UN will present in response to the UNSYG's latest report on UNSCR 1701. DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille first mentioned this subject July 8 during a discussion focused on Syrian FM Mu'allim's July 4 visit to Paris (see septel). He indicated France had no intention to make Shab'a Farms a major part of any PRST, but did want some specific reference to it as a gesture of support to Lebanese President Sleiman and PM Siniora. The French, Pouille added, want to give the UNSYG cover through the PRST to pursue quietly his efforts to encourage the Israelis to accept placing the territory under temporary UN sovereignty with joint IDF/UNIFIL/LAF patrols. Timing for the PRST would follow the July 13 summit in Paris to launch the Union for the Mediterranean.

¶2. (C) Pouille and newly appointed NEA A/S-equivalent Patrice Paoli raised the issue again July 9 in a meeting primarily focused on the Libyan draft UNSCR on Israeli settlements (also reported septel). When asked why the French want to pursue this matter given Israeli opposition to moving ahead on Shab'a Farms at this time (see Paris 1221), Pouille and Paoli claimed that the Israelis had provided conflicting views on changing the status quo there. Kouchner wants to give Sleiman and Siniora some indication of international backing for their desire to deprive Hezbollah of one of its main pretexts for continuing to refuse to be disarmed. With the Lebanese and Syrian presidents, the Israeli prime minister, and UNSYG all in town for the Paris summit, Paoli and Pouille asserted that Shab'a Farms will figure somewhere in discussions on the summit's margins.

¶3. (C) Comment: The MFA's demarche on Shab'a Farms is not surprising, but we are not clear whether it was fully coordinated with the Elysee. In one of our recent conversations with French Presidency NEA adviser Boris Boillon, the Elysee indicated France was less interested in pressing on Shab'a Farms than it had been before President Sarkozy's visit to Israel. Boillon referred to conflicting views among senior Israeli officials, with Israeli Deputy PM Ramon, regarded by the French as a bit of a maverick, saying he was open to an initiative on Shab'a Farms while PM Olmert's two key peace process advisers warned the French not to proceed when they visited Paris prior to Sarkozy's trip to Israel. We are not sure where this desire to highlight Sha'ba Farms in the PRST is coming from, but it could reflect purely MFA thinking (perhaps reflecting Kouchner's views) or the Elysee's realization that Sarkozy needs to have something to say to Sleiman when the two meet this weekend as a follow-on to their conversation in early June in Beirut. End

comment

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